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NATURAL THEOLOGY.

[Concluded from page 34.]

OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

OUR knowledge of the Divine Nature, though sufficient to raise within us the highest adoration and love, must needs be very imperfect ; for we cannot form a distinct idea of any moral or intellectual quality, unless we find some trace of it in ourselves. Now God must possess innumerable perfections, which neither we, nor any created being, can comprehend. When we ascribe to him every good quality that we can conceive, and consider him as possessed of them all in supreme perfection, and as free from every imperfection, we form the best idea of him that we can : but it must fall infinitely short of the truth. The attributes of God, which it is in our power in any degree to conceive, or to make the subject of investigation, have been divided into NATURAL, as *unity, self-existence, spirituality, omnipotence, immutability, eternity* ; INTELLECTUAL, as *knowledge and wisdom* ; and MORAL, as *justice, goodness, mercy, holiness*.

That God *is*, has been proved already. That there are more gods than one, we have no evidence, and therefore cannot rationally believe. Nay, even from the light of nature we have evidence that there is one only. For in the works of creation there appears that perfect unity of design, which naturally determines an attentive spectator to refer them all to one first cause. Accordingly the wisest men in the heathen world, though they worshipped inferior *deities*, (I should rather say *names which they substituted for deities*,) did yet seem to acknowledge one supreme God, the greatest and best of beings, the father of gods and men. It is probable, the belief in one God was the original belief of mankind with respect to Deity. But, partly from their narrow views, which made them think that one being could not, without subordinate agents, superintend all things—partly from their flattery to living great men, and gratitude to the dead, disposing them to pay divine honours to human creatures—partly from fanciful analogies be-

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tween the divine Providence and earthly governments—and partly from the figures of poetry, by which they saw the attributes of Deity personified, they soon corrupted the original belief, and fell into polytheism and idolatry. And no ancient people ever retained long their belief in the one true God, except the Jews, who were enlightened by revelation: and even they were frequently inclined to adopt the superstitions of their neighbours. We see then, that, in order to ascertain and fix men's notions of the divine *unity*, revelation seems to be necessary.

Self-existence or independence is another natural attribute of God. If he depended on any thing, that thing would be superior and prior to him, which is absurd; because he himself is the supreme and the first cause: therefore his existence does not depend on any thing whatever. The attribute of self-existence is something that surpasses our comprehension; and no wonder; since all the beings, that we see around us in the world, are dependent. But, as already observed, there are many things which we must acknowledge to be true, notwithstanding that we cannot comprehend them.

We see the material universe in motion; but matter is inert, and, so far as we know, nothing can move it but mind. Therefore God is a spirit. We do not mean that his nature is the same with that of our soul: it is infinitely more excellent. But we mean that he possesses intelligence and active power in supreme perfection; and as these qualities do not belong to matter, which is neither active nor intelligent, we must refer them to that which is not matter, but mind. Some of the ancients thought that God was the soul of the universe, and that the universe was, as it were, his body. But this cannot be; for wherever there is a body, there must be inactivity, and consequently imperfection. He is, therefore, a pure spirit. Nor can we conceive that he is confined within the limits of creation, as a soul is within its body; or that he is liable to impressions from material things, as the soul is from the body; or that material things are instruments necessary to the exertion of his attributes, as our bodies are to the exertions of our faculties. It must be as easy for him to act beyond the bounds of creation, as within them; to create new worlds, as to cease from creating. He is every where present and active; but it is a more perfect presence and activity than that of a soul within a body. Another notion once prevailed, similar to that which has just now been confuted, that the world is animated as a body is by a soul, not by the Deity himself, but by an universal spirit, which he created in the beginning, and of which the souls of men and other animals are parts or emanations. This I mention, not because a confutation is necessary; for it is mere hypothesis without any shadow of evidence; but because it

may be of use in explaining some passages of ancient authors, particularly of Virgil, who once and again alludes to it.*

In order to be satisfied that God is omnipotent, we need only to open our eyes, and look around upon the wonders of his creation. To produce such astonishing effects, as we see in the universe, and experience in our frame; and to produce them out of nothing, and sustain them in the most perfect regularity, must certainly be the effect of a power which is able to do all things, and which, therefore, nothing can resist. But the divine power cannot extend to what is either impossible in itself, or unsuitable to the perfection of his nature. To make the same thing at the same time to be and not to be, is plainly impossible; and to act inconsistently with justice, goodness and wisdom, must be equally impossible to a being of infinite purity.

That God is from everlasting to everlasting, is evident from his being self-existent and almighty. That he was from all eternity, has been proved already; and it can admit of no doubt, that what is omnipotent and independent must continue to all eternity. In treating of the eternity of God, as well as of his omnipresence, some authors have puzzled themselves to little purpose, by attempting to explain in what manner he is connected with infinite space and endless duration. But it is vain to search into those mysteries; as they lie far beyond the reach of all human, and most probably of all created intelligences. Of this we are certain; for upon the principle just now mentioned, it may be demonstrated, that the Supreme Being had no beginning, and that of his existence there can be no end. That which is omnipotent and eternal, is incapable of being changed by any thing else; and that which is infinitely wise and good, can never be supposed to make any change in itself. The Deity, therefore, is unchangeable.

As he is the maker and preserver of all things, and every where present, (for to suppose him to be in some places only, and not in all, would suppose him to be a limited and imperfect being,) his knowledge must be infinite, and comprehend, at all times, whatever is, or was, or shall be. Were his knowledge progressive, like ours, it would be imperfect; for they who become wise, must formerly have been less so. Wisdom is the right exercise of knowledge: and that he is infinitely wise, is proved incontestibly by the same arguments that prove his existence.

The goodness of God appears in all his works of creation and providence. Being infinitely and eternally happy in himself, it was goodness alone that could move him to create the universe, and give being and the means of happiness to the innumerable orders of creatures contained in it. Revelation

* *Æneid* vi. 724. *Georg.* iv. 220.

gives such a display of divine goodness, as must fill us with the most ardent gratitude and adoration. For in it we find that God has put it in our power, notwithstanding our degeneracy and unworthiness, to be happy both in this life and for ever ; a hope which reason alone could never have permitted us to entertain, on any ground of certainty. And here we may repeat, what has been already hinted at, that although the right use of reason supplies our first notions of the divine nature, yet it is from revelation that we receive those distinct ideas of his attributes and providence, which are the foundation of our dearest hopes. The most enlightened of the heathens had no certain knowledge of his unity, spirituality, eternity, wisdom, justice, or mercy ; and, by consequence, could never contrive a comfortable system of natural religion ; as Socrates, the wisest of them, acknowledged.

Lastly ; justice is necessary to the formation of every good character ; and therefore the Deity must be perfectly just. This, however, is an awful consideration to creatures, who, like us, are immersed in error and wickedness, and whose conscience is always declaring, that every sin deserves punishment. It is reasonable to think that a being infinitely good must also be of infinite mercy : but still, the purity and justice of God must convey the most alarming thoughts to those who know themselves to have been, in instances without number, inexcusably criminal. But, from what is revealed in scripture, concerning the divine dispensations with respect to man, we learn, that on performing certain conditions, we shall be forgiven and received into favour, by means which at once display the divine mercy in the most amiable light, and fully vindicate the divine justice.

It is indeed impossible to understand the doctrines of our religion, and not to *wish, at least*, that they may be true : for they exhibit the most comfortable views of God and his providence ; they recommend the purest and most perfect morality ; and they breathe nothing throughout, but benevolence, equity and peace. And one may venture to affirm, that no man ever wished the gospel to be true, who did not *find* it so. Its evidence is even more than sufficient to satisfy those who love it. And every man, who knows it, must love it, if he be a man of candour and a good heart.

REMARK.

MANY persons spend so much time in criticising about the Gospel, that they have none left for practising it. As if two men should quarrel about the phraseology of their Physician's prescriptions, and forget to take the medicine.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

(Continued from page 48.)

Book I.].....[CENT. 1.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the civil and religious state of the world, at the birth of Christ.

A GREAT part of the world had become subject to the Roman empire, when JESUS CHRIST made his appearance upon earth. The remoter nations, which had submitted to the yoke of this mighty empire, were ruled either by Roman governors invested with temporary commissions, or by their own princes and laws, in subordination to the republic, whose sovereignty was to be acknowledged, and from which the conquered kings that were continued in their dominions, derived their borrowed majesty. At the same time, the Roman people and their venerable senate, though they had not lost all shadow of liberty, were yet, in reality, reduced to a state of servile submission to AUGUSTUS CESAR, who, by artifice, perfidy, and bloodshed, had proceeded to an enormous degree of power, and united in his own person the pompous titles of Emperor, Sovereign, Pontiff, Censor, Tribune of the People, Proconsul; in a word, all the great offices of the State.

The Roman government, considered both with respect to its form and its laws, was certainly mild and equitable. But the injustice and avarice of the prætors and proconsuls, and the ambitious lust of conquest and dominion, which was the predominant passion of the Roman people, together with the rapacious proceedings of the Publicans, by whom the taxes of the empire were levied, were the occasions of perpetual tumults and unsupportable grievances. And among the many evils that arise from thence, we justly reckon the formidable armies that were necessary to support these extortions in the provinces, and the civil wars which frequently broke out between the oppressed nations and their haughty conquerors.

It must, at the same time, be acknowledged, that this supreme dominion of one people, or rather of one man, over so many kingdoms, was attended with many considerable advantages to mankind in general, and to the propagation and advancement of Christianity in particular. For, by the means of this almost universal empire, many nations, different in their language and in their manners, were united more intimately in social intercourse. Hence a passage was opened to the remotest countries, by the communications which the Romans formed between the conquered provinces. Hence also the nations, whose manners were savage and barbarous, were civilized by

the laws and commerce of the Romans. And by this, in short, the benign influence of letters and philosophy was spread abroad in countries which had lain before under the darkest ignorance. All this contributed, no doubt, in a singular manner, to facilitate the progress of the Gospel, and to crown the labours of its first ministers and heralds with success.

The Roman empire, at the birth of CHRIST, was less agitated by wars and tumults, than it had been for many years before. For, though I cannot assent to the opinion of those, who, following the account of OROSIUS, maintain, that the temple of Janus was then shut, and that wars and discords had absolutely ceased throughout the world; yet it is certain that the period in which our Saviour descended upon earth, may be justly stiled the *Pacific Age*, compared with preceding times. And indeed the tranquillity which then reigned, was necessary to enable the ministers of CHRIST to execute with success their sublime commissions to the human race.

The want of ancient records renders it impossible to say any thing satisfactory or certain concerning the state of those nations, who did not receive the Roman yoke: nor indeed is their history essential to our present purpose. It is sufficient to observe, with respect to them, that those who inhabited the eastern regions, were strangers to the sweets of liberty, and groaned under the burden of an oppressive yoke. This, their softness and effeminacy, both in point of manners and bodily constitution, contributed to make them support with an unmanly patience; and even the religion they professed riveted their chains. On the contrary, the northern nations enjoyed in their frozen dwellings the blessings of sacred freedom, which their government, their religion, a robust and vigorous frame of body and spirit, derived from the inclemency and severity of their climate, all united to preserve and maintain.

All these nations lived in the practice of the most abominable superstitions. For though the knowledge of one Supreme Being was entirely effaced in the human mind, but showed itself frequently even through the darkness of the grossest idolatry; yet all nations, except the Jews, acknowledged a number of powers whom they called gods, and one or more of which they supposed to preside over each particular province or people. They worshipped these fictitious deities with various rites; they considered them as widely different from each other in sex and power, in their nature, and also in their respective offices; and they appeased them by a multiplicity of ceremonies and offerings, in order to obtain their protection and favour. So that, however different the degrees of enormity might be, with which this absurd and impious theology appeared in different countries; yet there was no nation, whose sacred rites and whose religious worship did not discover a manifest abuse of reason, and very striking marks of extravagance and folly.

Every nation then had its respective gods, over which presided one more excellent than the rest; yet in such a manner, that this supreme deity was himself controlled by the rigid empire of the Fates, or what the philosophers called *eternal necessity*. The gods of the east were different from those of the Gauls, the Germans, and the other northern nations. The Grecian divinities differed widely from those of the Egyptians, who deified plants, animals, and a great variety of the productions both of nature and art. Each people had also their particular manner of worshipping and appeasing their respective deities, entirely different from the sacred rites of other countries. In process of time, however, the Greeks and Romans grew as ambitious in their religious pretensions as in their political claims. They maintained that *their* gods, though under different names, were the objects of religious worship in all nations, and therefore they gave the names of their deities to those of other countries. This pretension, whether supported by ignorance or other means, introduced inexpressible darkness and perplexity into the history of the ancient superstitions, and has been also the occasion of innumerable errors in the writings of the learned.

One thing, indeed, which at first appears remarkable, is, that this variety of religion and of gods neither produced wars nor dissensions among the different nations, the Egyptians excepted. Nor is it perhaps necessary to except even them, since their wars undertaken for their gods cannot be looked upon, with propriety, as wholly of a religious nature.* Each nation suffered its neighbours to follow their own method of worship, to adore their own gods, to enjoy their own rites and ceremonies, and discovered no displeasure at their diversity of sentiment in religious matters. There is, however, little wonderful in this spirit of mutual toleration, when we consider that they all looked upon the world as one great empire divided into various provinces, over every one of which a certain order of divinities presided; and that therefore none could behold with contempt the gods of other nations, or force strangers to pay homage to theirs. The Romans exercised this toleration in the amplest manner. For, though they would not allow any changes to be made in the religions that were publicly professed in the empire, nor any new form of worship to be openly introduced; yet they granted to their citizens a full liberty of observing in private the sacred rites of other nations, and of honouring foreign deities (whose

* The religious wars of the Egyptians were not undertaken to compel others to adopt their worship, but to avenge the slaughter that was made of their gods, viz. *Crocodiles*, &c. by the neighbouring nations. They were not offended at their neighbours for serving other divinities, but could not bear that they should put theirs to death.

N. B. Notes with the sign of a hand [✍] prefixed, are made by the translator.

worship contained nothing inconsistent with the interest and laws of the republic) with feasts, temples, consecrated groves, and such-like testimonies of homage and respect.

The deities of almost all nations were either ancient heroes, renowned for noble exploits and worthy deeds, or kings and generals who had founded empires, or women become illustrious by remarkable actions or useful inventions. The merit of these distinguished and eminent persons, contemplated by their posterity with an enthusiastic gratitude, was the reason of their being exalted to celestial honours. The natural world furnishes another kind of deities, that were added to these by some nations. And as the sun, moon and stars, shone forth with a lustre superior to that of all other material beings; so it is certain that they particularly attracted the attention of mankind, and received religious homage from almost all the nations of the world.* From these beings of a nobler kind, idolatry descended into an enormous multiplication of inferior powers; so that in many countries, mountains, trees and rivers, the earth, the sea, and the winds, nay, even virtues, vices, and diseases, had their shrines attended by devout and zealous worshippers.

These deities were honoured with rites and sacrifices of various kinds, according to their respective nature and offices. The rites used in their worship were absurd and ridiculous, and frequently cruel and obscene. Most nations offered animals, and some proceeded to the enormity of human sacrifices. As to their prayers, they were void of piety and sense, both with respect to their matter and their form. Pontiffs, priests and ministers, distributed into several classes, presided in this strange worship, and were appointed to prevent disorder in the performance of the sacred rites. This *order*, which was supposed to be distinguished by an immediate intercourse and friendship with the gods, abused their authority in the basest manner, to deceive an ignorant and wretched people.

The religious worship we have now been considering, was confined to stated *times* and *places*. The statues and other rep-

* The ingenious editor of the *RUINS of DALBEC* has given us, in the preface of that noble work, a very curious account of the origin of the religious worship that was offered to the heavenly bodies by the Syrians and Arabians. In those uncomfortable deserts, where the day presents nothing to the view, but the uniform, tedious and melancholy prospect of barren sands, the night discloses a most delightful and magnificent spectacle, and appears arrayed with charms of the most attractive kind. For the most part unclouded and serene, it exhibits to the wondering eye the *Host of heavens*, in all their amazing variety and glory. In the view of this stupendous scene, the transition from admiration to idolatry was too easy to uninstructed minds; and a people, whose climate offered no beauties to contemplate but those of the firmament, would naturally look thither for the objects of their worship. The form of idolatry in Greece was different from that of the Syrians; and Mr. Wood ingeniously attributes this to that smiling, variegated scene of mountains, vallies, rivers, groves, woods and fountains, which the transported imagination, in the midst of its pleasing astonishment, supposed to be the seats of invisible deities.

representations of the gods were placed in the temples, and supposed to be animated in an incomprehensible manner. For the votaries of these fictitious deities, however destitute they might be of reason in other respects, avoided carefully the imputation of worshipping inanimate beings, such as brass, wood, and stone, and therefore pretended that the divinity represented by the statue, was really present in it, if the dedication was truly and properly made.

But beside the public worship of the gods, to which all, without exception, were admitted, there were certain religious institutions and rites celebrated in secret by the Greeks and several eastern nations, to which a very small number were allowed access. These were commonly called *mysteries*; and the persons who desired to be initiated therein, were obliged previously to exhibit satisfactory proofs of their fidelity and patience, by passing through various trials and ceremonies of the most disagreeable kind. The secret of these institutions was kept in the strictest manner, as the initiated could not reveal any thing that passed in them without exposing their lives to the most imminent danger; and that is the reason why, at this time, we are so little acquainted with the true nature and real design of these hidden rites. It is, however, well known, that in some of those *mysteries*, many things were transacted contrary to modesty and decency. And indeed, from the whole of the Pagan rites, the intelligent few might easily learn, that the divinities generally worshipped, were rather men famous for their vices than distinguished by virtuous and worthy deeds.

This religion had no tendency to excite or nourish solid and true virtue in the minds of men. The gods and goddesses exhibited rather examples of egregious crimes, than of useful and illustrious virtues. The gods were esteemed superior to men, in power and immortality, but, in other respects, as their equals. The priests were little solicitous to animate the people to a virtuous conduct, either by their precepts or their examples; nay, they declared that all essential to the true worship of the gods, was contained in the rites and institutions, which the people had received by tradition from their ancestors. And with regard to future rewards and punishments, the general notions were partly uncertain, partly licentious, and often more proper to administer indulgence to vice than encouragement to virtue. Hence the wiser part of mankind, about the time of CHRIST's birth, looked upon the whole system of religion, as a just object of ridicule and contempt.

The consequences of this wretched theology were an universal corruption of manners, which discovered itself in the impunity of the most flagitious crimes. JUVENAL and PERSIUS among the Latins, and LUCIAN among the Greeks, bear testimony to the justice of this heavy accusation. It is also well

known that no public law prohibited the sports of the gladiators, the exercise of unnatural lusts, the licentiousness of divorce, the custom of exposing infants, and of procuring abortions, nor the frontless atrocity of consecrating publicly stews and brothels to certain divinities.

Such as were not sunk in an unaccountable and brutish stupidity, perceived the deformity of these religious systems. To these the crafty priests addressed two considerations, to prevent their incredulity and to dispel their doubts. The first was drawn from the miracles and prodigies, which, they pretended, were daily wrought in the temples, before the statues of the gods and the heroes placed there ; and the second was deduced from the oracles and divination, by which they maintained, that the secrets of futurity were unfolded through the interposition of the gods. In both these points, the cunning of the priests imposed miserably upon the ignorance of the people ; and if the discerning foresaw the cheat, they were obliged, from a regard to their own safety, to laugh with caution ; since the priests were ready to accuse, before a raging and superstitious multitude, those who discovered their religious frauds, as rebels against the majesty of the immortal gods.

At the time of CHRIST's appearance upon earth, the religion of the Romans, as well as their arms, had extended itself through a great part of the world. In the subjected provinces, however, there arose a new kind of religion, formed by a mixture of their ancient rites with those of the Romans. The conquered nations were persuaded by degrees to admit into their worship a great number of the sacred rites and customs of their conquerors. In this change the Romans meant not only to confirm their authority by the aid of religion, but also to abolish the inhuman rites, performed by many of the barbarous nations.

The religion of the Persians, Egyptians and Indians, appears to have been solely calculated for the preservation of the State, the support of the royal authority and grandeur, the maintenance of public peace, and the advancement of civil virtues : And that of the northern nations, to promote a military spirit ; since all the traditions found among the Germans, the Britons, the Celts, and the Goths, concerning their divinities, have a manifest tendency to excite and nourish fortitude and ferocity, an insensibility of danger, and a contempt of life.

None of these nations indeed ever arrived at such an excess of universal barbarity and ignorance, as not to have some discerning men among them, who were sensible of the extravagance of all these religions. But of these sagacious observers, some were destitute of sufficient weight and authority to remedy evils of such magnitude ; and others wanted the will to exert themselves in such a glorious cause. And the truth is,

none of them had the wisdom equal to such a solemn and arduous enterprize. This appears manifestly from the laborious, but useless efforts of some of the Greek and Roman philosophers against the vulgar superstitions. These venerable sages delivered in their writings many sublime things concerning the nature of God, and the duties incumbent upon man : they disputed with sagacity against the popular religion ; but to all these they added such chimerical notions, and such absurd subtleties of their own, as may serve to convince us, that it belongs to God alone, and not to man, to reveal the truth without any mixture of impurity or error.

About the time of CHRIST's appearance upon earth, there were two kinds of philosophy which prevailed among the civilized nations. One was the philosophy of the Greeks, adopted also by the Romans ; and the other, that of the Orientals, which had a great number of votaries in *Persia, Syria, Chaldea, Egypt*, and even among the Jews. The former was distinguished by the simple title of *philosophy*. The latter was honoured with the more pompous appellation of *science* or *knowledge* ; since those who embraced this latter sect pretended to be the restorers of the knowledge of God, which was lost in the world.* The followers of both these systems, in consequence of vehement disputes and dissensions about several points, subdivided themselves into a variety of sects. It is, however, to be observed, that all the sects of Oriental philosophy deduced their various tenets from one fundamental principle, which they held in common ; whereas the Greeks were much divided even about the first principle of science.

As we shall have occasion hereafter to speak of the Oriental philosophy, we shall confine ourselves here to the doctrines taught by the Grecian sages, and shall give some account of the various sects into which they were divided.

Among the Grecian sects there were some which declared openly against all religion ; and others, who, though they acknowledged a Deity, and admitted a religion, yet cast a cloud over the truth, instead of exhibiting it in its genuine beauty and lustre.

Of the former kind were the Epicureans and Academics. The Epicureans maintained, " That the world arose from chance ; that the gods (whose existence they did not dare to deny) neither did nor could extend their providential care to human affairs ; that the soul was mortal ; that *pleasure* was to be regarded as the ultimate end of man ; and that *virtue* was neither worthy of esteem nor choice, but with a view to its attainment." The Academics asserted the impossibility of ar-

* St. Paul mentions and condemns both these kinds of Philosophy ; the Greek, in the *Epistle to the Colossians*, ii. 8. and the Oriental, or Gnosis, in the *First Epistle to Timothy*, vi. 20.

riving at truth, and held it uncertain, "Whether the gods existed or not; whether the soul was mortal or immortal; whether virtue was preferable to vice, or vice to virtue." These two sects, though they struck at the foundations of all religion, were the most numerous of all others at the birth of CHRIST, and were particularly encouraged by the liberality of the rich and the protection of those in power.*

There was another kind of philosophy, deficient by the obscurity it cast upon the truth. Under the philosophers of this class may be reckoned the Platonists, the Stoics, and the followers of ARISTOTLE, whose subtle disputations concerning GOD, religion, and the social duties, were of little solid use to mankind. The nature of GOD, as explained by ARISTOTLE, is something like the principle that gives motion to a machine; is a nature happy in the contemplation of itself, and entirely regardless of human affairs; and such a divinity, who differs little from the god of Epicurus, cannot reasonably be the object either of love or fear. With respect to the doctrine of this philosopher, concerning the human soul, it is uncertain whether he believed its immortality or not. What then could be expected from such a philosophy? Could any thing solid and satisfactory, in favour of piety and virtue, be hoped for from a system which excluded from the universe a divine Providence, and insinuated the mortality of the human soul?

The god of the Stoics has somewhat more majesty than the divinity of ARISTOTLE; nor is he represented by those philosophers as sitting above the starry heavens in a supine indolence, and a perfect inattention to the affairs of the universe. Yet he is described as a corporal being, united to matter, and subject to the determinations of an immutable *fate*, so that neither rewards nor punishments can properly proceed from him.† According to the philosophy of this sect, the existence of the soul was confined to a certain period of time. Now it is manifest, these tenets remove at once the strongest motives to virtue, and the most powerful restraints upon vice; and therefore the stoical system may be considered as a body of specious and pompous doctrine, but at the same time as a body without nerves, or any principles of consistence and vigour.

* That of the Epicureans was, however, the most numerous, as appears from the testimony of Cicero.

† Thus is the stoical doctrine of fate generally represented; but not more generally than unjustly. Their *fatum*, when carefully and attentively examined, seems to have signified no more, in the intention of the wisest of that sect, than the plan of government formed originally in the divine mind, a plan all wise and perfect; and from which, of consequence, the Supreme Being, morally speaking, can never depart. So that, when Jupiter is said by the Stoics to be subject to immutable *fate*, this means no more than that he is subject to the wisdom of his own counsels, and acts ever in conformity with his supreme perfections.

PLATO is generally looked upon as superior to all the other philosophers in wisdom ; and this eminent rank does not seem to have been undeservedly conferred upon him. He taught that the universe was governed by a being glorious in power and wisdom, and possessed of a perfect liberty and independence. He extended also the views of mortals beyond the grave, and showed them in futurity prospects adapted to excite their hopes, and to work upon their fears. His doctrine, however, had considerable defects. Nor will his moral philosophy appear worthy of such a high degree of admiration, if we attentively examine and compare together its various parts and reduce them to their principles.

As, then, in these different sects there were many things maintained highly unreasonable and absurd ; and as a spirit of opposition and dispute prevailed among them all ; certain men of true discernment, and of moderate characters, were of opinion, that none of these sects were to be adhered to in all matters, but that it was rather wise to choose and extract out of each of them such tenents and doctrines as were good and reasonable, and to abandon the rest. This gave rise to a new form of philosophy in *Egypt*, and principally at *Alexandria*, which was called the *Eclectic*. It appears this philosophy flourished at *Alexandria*, when our Saviour was on earth. The Eclectics held PLATO in the highest esteem, though they made no scruple to join with his doctrines, whatever they thought conformable to reason in the tenets and opinions of the other philosophers.

From this short view of the deplorable state of the world at the birth of *Christ*, the attentive reader will easily conclude, that mankind, in that period of darkness and corruption, stood highly in need of some divine teacher to convey to the mind true and certain principles of religion and wisdom, and to recall wandering mortals to the sublime paths of piety and virtue. The consideration of that wretched condition of mankind, will be also singularly useful to those who are not sufficiently acquainted with the advantages, the comforts, and the support, which the sublime doctrines of Christianity are so proper to administer in every state, relation, and circumstance of life. Miserable and unthinking creatures treat with negligence, nay, sometimes with contempt, the religion of *JESUS*, not considering that they are indebted to it for the good things which they so ungratefully enjoy.

[To be continued.]

ELEMENTS OF GENERAL KNOWLEDGE.

[It has given us much pleasure to peruse the first volume of a late publication, entitled 'Elements of General Knowledge,' &c.* We cannot give our readers a better idea of its intrinsic merit, nor can we perhaps make a better choice, than to select some of its contents for our Magazine. We begin with extracts from the introductory Chapter.]

“TO separate some of the most useful and the most beautiful parts from the great mass of human knowledge ; to arrange them in such regular order, that they may be inspected with ease, and varied at pleasure ; and to recommend them to the careful examination of young men who are studiously disposed, constitute the design of the author of this work.

It is likewise his object to make the most useful topics of literature familiar and easy to general readers, who have not had the advantage of a learned education.

The more he reflects upon the *present state of society*, the *various faculties* of the mind, and the *great advantages* which arise from acquiring an *ample fund of valuable ideas*, the more he is convinced of the utility of engaging in the pursuit of general knowledge, as far as may be consistent with professional views, and particular situations in life.

The custom has prevailed of late years, much more than it did formerly, of introducing young men at an early age into the mixed company of persons older than themselves. As such is the reigning mode, they ought to be prepared in some degree at least to blend manly and serious topics with the sallies of light and gay conversation.”

“The more ideas they acquire in common, the sooner their prejudices are removed ; a more perfect congeniality of opinion prevails ; they rise higher in each other's estimation, and the pleasure of society is ripened into the sentiments of attachment and friendship. In such parties, where the ‘feast of reason and the flow of soul’ prevail with the happiest effect, he who unites to knowledge of the world, the leading ideas and rational principles which well-chosen books can supply, will render himself the most acceptable and the most valuable companion.

Such are now the abundant productions of the press, that books written in our own language upon all subjects whatever, are constantly published and quickly circulated through the whole kingdom. This circumstance has lessened that wide and very

* This invaluable work has been elegantly republished in Philadelphia, and is for sale at Messrs. Beers & Howe's, as will be seen by their Advertisement on the cover of this Magazine.

evident distinction, which in former times prevailed between the learned and the unlearned classes of community. At present, they who have not enjoyed the benefit of a classical education, may reap many of the fruits of learning without the labour of cultivation, as translations furnish them with convenient and easy expedients, which can, in some measure, although an incomplete one, make amends for their ignorance of the original authors. And upon all subjects of general Literature, Science and Taste, in their actual and most highly improved state, they have the same means of information in their power with those who have been regularly educated in the Universities, and the public schools."

"In order to prevent contractedness of disposition, and errors of judgment, what method can be more efficacious, than to open some of the gates of general knowledge, and display its most beautiful prospects?"

"Such prospects, distinctly and deliberately surveyed, will produce the most beneficial effects." "Various pursuits, skillfully chosen and assiduously followed, can give proper activity to every faculty of the mind, inasmuch as they engage the judgment, the memory and the imagination, in an agreeable exercise, and are associated for one beneficial purpose—Like the genial drops of rain, which descend from heaven, they unite in one common stream to strengthen and enlarge the current of knowledge.

By studies thus diversified, the mind is supplied with copious materials for the serious reflections of retirement, or the lively intercourse of society: it is enabled, by the consideration of many particular ideas, to form those general principles, which it is always eager to embrace, which are of great use in the conduct of life, and may prove in every situation pleasing and advantageous."

"It is evident from general observation, that the principles of religion are congenial with the mind of man: for even among tribes the most barbarous and uncivilized, whether we explore the wilds of Africa, or the shores of the Pacific Ocean, where the capacities of the inhabitants are narrow and limited, and very few virtues are remarked to expand and flourish, some traces of religion, some notions of an omnipotent and over-ruling Power, darkened as they may be by gross superstition, are still found to prevail."

"It appears, therefore, that to inculcate those principles of religious duty, which the mind naturally invites, and to improve its capacity for the reception of the most sublime truths, is no more than a just attention and due obedience to the voice of nature."

"And as the truth of Christianity is founded upon the strongest arguments, and unites in the closest union our public and

private, our temporal and eternal happiness, it justly forms the groundwork of education. The attributes of the great Creator—his power as the author, and his goodness as the governor of the universe; the bright image of the Saviour of the world, as presented by the holy Evangelists; his actions marked by the purest benevolence; his precepts tending immediately to the happiness of man; and his promises capable of exciting the most exalted and the most glorious hopes, are peculiarly calculated to strike the imagination, and interest the sensibility of youth. Such sublime topics, inculcated upon right principles, cannot fail to encourage those ardent sentiments of love, gratitude, and veneration, which are natural to susceptible and tender minds. Since, therefore, the same principles which are congenial with the dispositions of young men, are most conducive to their happiness; since, in short, the evidences of CHRISTIANITY are miraculous; since it is an express revelation of the will of GOD, and as such we can have no pretence to reject its proofs, and no right to resist its claims to our observance; it must unquestionably be a subject of transcendent importance, and therefore stands as the first and leading topic of my work."

LANGUAGE and ELOQUENCE stand next in order in the introductory chapter, on the use of which some concise and appropriate remarks are made. History then follows, on which are these observations: "Cicero, the most celebrated of the Roman orators, has very justly remarked, that ignorance of the events and transactions of former times, condemns us to a perpetual state of childhood: from this condition of mental darkness we are rescued by HISTORY, which supplies us with its friendly light to view the instructive events of past ages, and to collect wisdom from the conduct of others. And as there are particular countries from which we have derived the most important information in religion, in arts, in sciences, and in literature, we ought carefully to inspect the pages of these interesting records."

"The most ancient people of whom we have any authentic accounts, are the Jews: to them was communicated, and by them was preserved, the knowledge of the true GOD; while all other nations were sunk in the most abject superstition, and disgraced by the grossest idolatry.

The writers of Greece and Rome have recorded such numerous and such eminent instances of the genius, valour and wisdom of their countrymen, as have been the just subjects of admiration for all succeeding ages; for which reason the accounts of THEIR MEMORABLE TRANSACTIONS ought to be carefully inspected before we proceed to survey the HISTORY OF MODERN EUROPE, and of our NATIVE COUNTRY."

With respect to Logic, it is observed: "As reason is the noblest faculty of the human mind, it is of the highest impor-

tance to consider its proper employment, more especially as upon its co-operation with religion in controlling the flights of the imagination and abating the violence of the passions, depends the happiness of life. That system of *LOGIC*, therefore, which consists not in abstruse terms or argumentative subtlety, but in the manly exercise of the rational powers, justly claims an important place in every system of education."

On Natural History it is observed: "The human mind, not content with speculations upon the properties of matter alone, delights to survey the wonderful works of the *GREAT CREATOR*, as displayed in the various parts of the universe. This employment is a source of never-failing satisfaction to persons of every age. The productions of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, are closely connected with the well-being, and are conducive to the subsistence of man; so that natural history claims his particular attention."

The chapter concludes thus: "The *order* in which my *chapters* are disposed, is adapted to the progress of the faculties of the mind, from childhood to riper years. The principles of religion, of language, and of history, are first presented to my readers; and the elements of science, natural history, and taste, together with the various studies which relate to the active scenes of life, close the volumes of knowledge. The foundation of the building is deeply laid, and composed of the most solid materials: the superstructure, raised to a proper elevation, displays ornament, while it is adapted to convenience."

Such is the sketch of my design, in which it is intended to trace the regular progress of application from puerile to manly studies—from elementary knowledge to professional duties. It is sufficiently finished to show that the fields of instruction are not only fertile, but the most various in their productions. Some spots bring forth the immortal fruits of religion, some the hardy plants of science, and some the delicate flowers of taste. Here then the active temper of youth, and their fondness for change, may find ample means of gratification, wherever they choose to wander and expatiate. Light pursuits may divert, after severe studies have fatigued the mind; and he who has been diligent to peruse the records of history, to solve the problems of science, or ascertain the distinctions of logic, may find an agreeable relaxation in surveying the beauties of nature, charming his ear with the delightful strains of music, pleasing his eye with the fair creations of the pencil, or delighting his fancy with the fictions of poetry.

I consider myself as assuming the office of a guide to the youthful and inexperienced traveller, and as undertaking to point out the interesting prospects of a charming country, without aspiring to the accuracy of a topographer, or the diligence

of an antiquarian. I shall conduct him who commits himself to my directions, from a low and narrow valley, where his views have been closely confined, to the summit of a lofty mountain : when he has reached the proper point of view, he will feel his faculties expand, he will breathe a purer air, enjoy a wider horizon, and observe woods, lakes, mountains, plains, and rivers, spreading beneath his feet in a delightful prospect. From this commanding eminence, I shall point out such places as are most deserving his researches ; and finally, I shall recommend him to those who will prove more instructive and more pleasing companions, through the remaining part of his journey."

[We select the following very choice production from the 'Churchman's Magazine,' a repository of much valuable information on the most interesting subjects.]

MEDITATIONS ON THE BEE.

GO forth, O my soul, like the industrious Bee, to thy work and to thy labour, until the evening of thy day upon earth. Take the wings of the morning, and fly quickly into the garden of God, the Church of the Redeemer. Visit continually the assemblies of the faithful ; those flowers whose unfading beauty graces the inheritance of the beloved ; and whose sweetness diffuses around them a savour of life unto life. There feed among the lilies of Paradise, which shine invested with the righteousness of saints, and, towering above the earth, keep their garments unspotted from the dust of corruption. Fly amongst them day by day, and familiarize them all to thy acquaintance. Pass not by them hastily, nor be content to gaze only upon their beauty ; but settle and fix thy meditations on them, until thou hast extracted the spirit and life that is in their writings and their examples, the nourishment of wisdom, and the sweetness of consolation. These flowers, it is true, spring from the same earth ; the same influences of heaven nourish and support them ; but various are their colours, and their virtues are diverse. To one is given knowledge ; to another meekness ; to another humility ; to another charity ; by the same Spirit. Each has its use and its beauty ; and he who would make honey, must suck virtue from all. But, above all, forget not to dwell evermore on the contemplation of Him who grew from the virgin stem of Jesse ; for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and of his fullness have all others received. He is the true Rose of Sharon ; red in the day of his passion, opening his beauties as the morning, in the midst of a crown of thorns, and perfect through suffering. He is the Lily planted in the humble vale, and from thence ascending up towards heav-

en, having his garments white as the light, which admits no stain to sully its virgin purity, and passeth through all things undefiled. Fly daily to him, and delight thyself in meditation on his life and death. From him and the other sweet flowers of his planting, when thou hast drawn matter of instruction in righteousness, return home and deposit these treasures in the cells of thy understanding and affections, thy head and thy heart, that thou mayest become a land flowing with honey, a land wherein dwells the righteousness of Jesus, and the comforts of the Holy One. And when thou hast thus laid up within thee the words of eternal life, be a faithful dispenser to others of the manifold grace of God, and let thy tongue be a channel to convey it from thy heart into those of thy brethren, distilling it in such proportions as every one is able to receive it : so that the heavenly Bridegroom may seal thee to salvation with this gracious testimony : Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb ; honey and milk are under thy tongue ; sweet and healing as the one, innocent and nourishing as the other, are all thy communications. And to encourage thee to be thus liberal to others of what *he* has freely given thee, thy dear Lord has told thee, that what thou givest to the least of thy brethren, he takes as given to him. And as, when risen from the dead, *he* accepted, at the hands of his disciples, a piece of an honey-comb ; so in the person of his members, risen from the death of sin, through the power of his resurrection, he expects from his disciples, and more especially from his ministers, a portion of that word which is declared by the holy psalmist to be sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. And in this respect he is graciously pleased to say, that he does himself feed upon it ; for so it is written—" I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse ; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey." These lessons of heavenly wisdom, O my soul, mayest thou learn from that pretty insect, of which the son of Sirach saith—" The Bee is little among such as fly, but her fruit is the chief of sweet things."

BP. HORNE.

OBSTACLES TO THE DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE.

[Concluded from page 55.]

THE want of time is, however, a powerful obstacle to the dissemination of knowledge ; so, likewise, is the injudicious use made even of the small portion of it devoted to the purpose. When we look around us, and see almost every person engaged in pursuits having little tendency to store the mind with the treasures of science ; and when we consider how rapid is the flight of time, how soon the day of probation

will be past, the scene of this life closed, and the soul transported from its tabernacle of clay to abodes of endless bliss or woe ; we cannot but lament, that the small portion of time appropriated to the acquisition of knowledge, is not employed to the best advantage. And this circumstance is the cause of additional regret, when we reflect on its great importance to the well-being of society, how manifold and momentous are the blessings resulting from a general dissemination of it, and how great and numerous the evils arising from the neglect of it. Inadequate as is the time spent by most people to obtain knowledge, yet even this, if well employed, would enable them to obtain much more information than they do at present. It would put the liberty, prosperity and happiness of our country on a much more substantial foundation than that on which they now rest. It would give additional light to the body of the people, more discernment and stability to the public mind, and greater discretion and unanimity to public councils.

But the great misfortune is, many people grossly err, not only by devoting much less time than is requisite to obtain information, but also by making an injudicious use even of this. Even in the early part of life, when the foundation of knowledge, virtue and usefulness, ought to be laid in the mind, a great part of the time spent for the purpose, is not employed to the best advantage. The most judicious systems and regulations for the instruction of youth, are seldom adopted at home, and not always at school. Every family might be a nursery of science. Certain hours of each day might be regularly appropriated to the purposes of instruction, reading and study. The choicest lessons of wisdom might be blended with the most affectionate solicitude, of which the bosom of a parent is susceptible. Within the walls of a father's mansion, might be regularly and quietly pursued, studies having the most beneficial tendency ; such as would store the mind with the choicest ideas, and call forth ' those latent qualities of the soul, by which she is fitted to survey this vast fabric of the world, to scan the heavens, and search into the causes of things.' From parental lips might flow the most friendly and useful admonitions, the most salutary and efficacious advice ; which would be to the young and susceptible mind, as the dews of Hermon upon the early buddings of spring, and as the gentle showers of May upon the tender plants.

Few families, however, adopt such methods of instruction, as that their children can obtain much solid information at home. And such generally is the irregularity, unsteadiness, and total want of system, with respect to parental instruction, that even the little time devoted to its attainment, within the family circle, is in a manner lost.

As, then, few parents will pay due attention to the education of their children at home, the common schools must be, next

to the universities and academies, the principal sources of knowledge to the body of the community. From them must flow those pure and living streams of science, virtue and morality, so essential to preserve this country from the flames of war, the heat of party, and the wasting elements of vice of every description, to which it is so imminently exposed. It must be the peculiarly interesting and honourable province of instructors of schools, to teach the rudiments of education, to inculcate and establish, in the youthful mind, those great and fundamental principles, on the possession and due observance of which depends human happiness here and for ever. It is, therefore, of the utmost consequence, that these schools be what they ought to be in every respect; that the instructors be competent to the arduous and important office, capable, persevering, and of irreproachable characters; and that such regulations be adopted as will effect the interesting object for which schools are established. But in a great part of them, there are also such deficiencies, in various respects, that youth cannot pursue their studies to advantage. A great sacrifice of time is made, and multitudes of our youth go forth into the world, ill qualified to discharge the various duties of life.

Religious institutions and the time set apart for the worship of that glorious BEING who gave existence to the universe and its inhabitants, are happily calculated to inculcate and disseminate the most important information on the most interesting subjects—subjects which deeply affect our present and eternal welfare. When the Almighty had founded the earth and spread out the heavens; when he had placed the sun, the moon and the stars, in their respective stations, to perform with splendor and regularity their annual and daily circuits, to the comfort and admiration of every age; when he had separated the light from the darkness, and the dry land from the waters; when he had formed the animal and vegetable kingdoms, created man from the dust, given him the stamp of his own image and the breath of his own life; and when, to give the last touch to his work, and joy to the universe, he had formed from the side of Adam the stay and solace of life; when the Almighty had accomplished all this, six days had elapsed, and he appointed the seventh as a day of rest, and as a season for man to contemplate the wonderful works of his hands. Again, after the lapse of ages, when the knowledge of the living God and of his divine precepts had become almost obliterated, or greatly obscured among all nations, save the Israelites; when the whole human race, with scarce an exception, bowed down to stocks and stones, and gave homage to idols, the Son of God appeared, and established his church on earth; which, like the sun in the heavens, was to remain

an everlasting light to the world, to conduct mankind from the paths of darkness and error into the ways of wisdom and truth—from the regions and shadow of death to life and immortality. The doors of this church are opened every seventh day ; and from the sacred oracles of the ever-living God, the great doctrines of Christianity, the fundamental principles of morality, are inculcated and explained. Here mankind are taught that God is, was, and ever will be ; that the glorious fabric of creation is the work of his hands ; that thousands of years before we existed, he formed this earth for our habitation in this life, and the heavens for our eternal mansion hereafter ; that before we thought of him, he thought of us ; before we could ask him to bless us, he conferred on us great and numerous blessings. Here, too, we are taught, that when the knowledge of life and immortality was buried in darkness, the Son of God descended from heaven *with tidings of great joy, which should be unto all people* ; that he came to proclaim life and immortality to all the sons of men, who, in sincerity of heart, should repent of their sins, put on the robes of righteousness, and walk humbly before their God : we are also informed, that when mankind, by their corruption and perverseness, had forfeited life and happiness, God gave his Son a sacrifice, a propitiation for the sins of the world ; and permitted him to die an ignominious death, that when mankind looked to the cross and beheld him suffering for their transgressions, they might be moved with gratitude, and induced to turn from the error of their ways.

But what use is made of the time so sacred, and of the institution so venerable ? Is one half the good derived from them which might be ? Is the Lord's day spent to the best advantage ? Does the Church effect the glorious object for which it was established ? On every seventh day, are mankind as attentive and diligent to obtain the treasures of another world, as they are on the six days to obtain those of this ; though the latter are perishable and the former lasting as eternity ? During the week time, they rise early and set up late, they toil laboriously and eat the bread of carefulness, to accumulate something to administer to the necessities and comfort of this life. But on the Sabbath, do they rise with the glorious luminary which is the emblem of the Sun of Righteousness, and go forth, rejoicing, to the worship of their SAVIOUR and their GOD ? Do they attentively labour through the day, to lay up treasures where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves break not through and steal ? Do they rejoice to spend that sacred day in contemplating the power, wisdom, and goodness of Him who created heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is ? Do they glory to sing the praises of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world

for the salvation of mortals? While the earth is nourished with the dew of the morning, that it may produce in great abundance the sustenance of life, do the prayers of mankind ascend on high? Do the walls of their mansions resound with thanksgiving and praise to Him who sitteth on the circuit of the heavens, dispensing blessings to the universe; who openeth his hand, and all created intelligences participate his beneficence? While the day of grace is yet prolonged, do they delight to worship Him who suffered every hardship, even death itself, for their redemption? Are they glad to attend the Church of Christ, to join each other in the public worship of Him, in whose hands are life and immortality, who spake and all things were created; who gave commandment, and the sun knew its station, the earth its orbit, and the sea its limits?

But though it is devoutly to be wished, that all mankind would spend the Sabbath as they ought; yet this is not the case. Immersed in the concerns of this life, they are prone to neglect those of the next. The Sabbath hangs heavily on the hands of many; and multitudes delight not, as did David of old, to go up to the house of the Lord. And the attention of many who attend at all, ill comports with the importance of the duties performed. They do not sufficiently attend to the all-important lessons of infinite wisdom. The oracles of inspiration, and the discourses penned by the hand of diligence and skill, are alike heard with coldness and inattention. The preacher, who during the week has risen early, and bedimmed his eyes by the midnight lamp, to provide the most interesting instruction for his audience, to exhibit, in the clearest light and in the most impressive manner, the most important truths and principles, finds his unremitted labour and perseverance but of partial benefit. Many of his neighbours and congregation do not attend at all. Others give but superficial attention. Some hear not half he says while present, and forget half they hear, as soon as absent. On their way to and from the house of God, the conversation of many is not proper for the Sabbath. The cares and thoughts of the preceding week are intermingled with all their words and actions. And the indifference and lukewarmness, manifested at the public worship, are also apparent with respect to the other religious duties of the day. Family prayers ascend not to the Father of mercies. The volume of eternal life is unopened and unread. Children are not taught to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Thus an injudicious use is made even of a great portion of the time set apart by God himself for the noblest purposes.

Another way in which much time spent to acquire knowledge is not employed to the best advantage, is a great proportion of that devoted to *reading*. Few people make the most judicious choice of what they read, not considering that it

may administer the poison or the balm even of eternal life. Much time is spent in perusing that which is of little consequence, or which never ought to be perused at all. "The age in which we live," says an eminent writer, "though a reading, is certainly not a learned age. Light publications of the day, calculated for the purpose of present enjoyment and superficial information, are preferred to the scientific pages of the learned, though less amusing writer, which require abstraction of thought and intensesness of application to make them yield fruit to the reader." This part of the world is deluged with a torrent of corrupt, low, and inflammatory publications, the effusions of blind or mad men, and fit to be read only in the infernal regions. They are, however, read by many, who devote little time to peruse any thing else. Even part of the Sabbath is spent for this purpose, while the dust remains unshaken from the volume of eternal life. And thus those pestilential productions, like the plagues of Egypt, or the poisonous winds from its burning sands, extend their baneful influence. They palsy the very sinews and nerves of social order and happiness. They tarnish the purest motives, blight the fairest conduct, and blacken the most unsullied characters. They make truth sicken, virtue languish, piety die, and humanity weep over the dread catastrophe. Such is the dispersed situation of the body of the people in this country, that their knowledge, customs and manners must be formed, in a great measure, from the books and other publications they peruse. A judicious choice of these is therefore of the highest consequence; and would have a similar tendency to improve and harmonize our citizens, as a more compact state of society. Scurrilous productions, novels and romances, should be considered as injurious to the morals and taste of the rising generation, as the company of the profane, false, vain, and abandoned. They are to be scrupulously avoided as the bane of society, and the destruction of every noble and virtuous principle.

Many people read so little, that what they read is as inadequate to refresh the mind, as light dews would be to refresh the ground during the summer. Thus the plants of wisdom, cherished in the spring of life, wither and die. And the summer and autumn of life are barren, as to the choice productions of knowledge, piety and virtue. Some read considerable; but hurry over the pages as through a wilderness, and are never at the trouble to turn back and review the objects they have scarcely noticed. They read with such precipitancy, and at the same time with such inattention and so little reflection, that what they peruse is as soon forgotten as read. The knowledge of such readers must be as contracted as the circle within which they roam. They can have few just ideas respecting any important subject, science, or author.

Some general observations will now close this very important subject. God has so established the nature of things, that no valuable object can be obtained by us, without making a proper use of adequate means. He himself does this, in order to accomplish the glorious purposes he has in view—to promote good and dispense happiness. To this end he created, organized, and gave motion to the vast machinery of the universe, and presides over the immense fabric with unwearied care and watchfulness. He has blessed man with capacity for acquiring knowledge, and the means of obtaining happiness; and both by his word and example admonished him to make a due use of them. The earth and sea are spread before us, and yield in abundance their salutary productions; yet the language of God and experience is, “Man must obtain his sustenance by the sweat of his brow.” We have before us the words of eternal life, the chart by which we may pass the ocean of this life, unshipwrecked by the wayward storms and billows of an adverse fortune; yet we are commanded to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. There is then a part for us to act, in order to obtain happiness, either in the present or future world. Neither the bread of this life, nor that of the next, can be obtained, without sufficient time and a proper use of it. The farmer, mechanic and merchant are all obliged to judiciously employ adequate time, in order to effect the object of their respective pursuits. What would be the situation of either, should he give but partial attention to his business? Would not poverty overtake him like an armed man, and destruction like a whirlwind? Knowledge, like other valuable treasures, can be obtained only by the due use of right means. Why then does not every member of society devote sufficient time to the purpose, and make a judicious use of it? Is it because the interest nearest the heart is not thereby promoted? Let it be remembered, that object is held by a precarious tenure, unless there be a general dissemination of knowledge. Without this, war, revolution, or some other great calamity may arise, and, like an overwhelming torrent, sweep away, with irresistible impetuosity, every vestige of our external treasures, however much we may possess. Where a great portion of mankind are uninformed and immoral, calamities sometimes approach, sudden, rapid and terrible as a tempest or hurricane. Their progress is often marked with blood; and on either side groans, sighs and tears swell the catalogue of horror. But suppose no national calamity should arise from the want of a general dissemination of knowledge; yet from a partial want of it, how much unhappiness may be produced? Erroneous conduct, vice, gaming, gluttony or drunkenness, the highwayman or assassin, either of these may in an evil hour destroy the property or life of an individual, and extinguish for ever the sunshine of a family’s prosperity and hap-

piness. Besides, what would it profit a man, should he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? This is a probationary state of existence; and it is reasonable to suppose some part of our time should be devoted to prepare for another, which will be more lasting, and in which our happiness will be placed on a less precarious foundation.

There are three considerations, among many others, which render the attainment and dissemination of knowledge peculiarly important and interesting. The first is, knowledge is necessary to establish in the minds of mankind right views concerning the being and attributes of God, a future state of existence, and our duty towards God and man. It is necessary to settle in the mind that great question, of all others the most momentous and interesting; viz. whether or not man is destined to progress in knowledge and happiness through endless ages. It is matter of the greatest astonishment that mankind in general should manifest so little concern respecting a question of such magnitude. For if we look back beyond the period of a century, we see that all the nations and ages, which existed previous to that period, have obeyed the injunction, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return, O man!" They have gone as a drop of the bucket into the ocean, and are lost amid the vast abyss. As it has been with them, so will it be with us. Those who shall live a century hence, will number the nations which now are with those which we now number, as returned to their mother earth. It becomes us to contemplate what will then be our situation, after our bodies shall have returned to the dust from which they originated. The knowledge connected with this subject, is of the highest consequence, and forms the only permanent basis of human happiness.

The second consideration which renders knowledge extremely interesting to us, is the affairs of the present time. We live in one of the most eventful periods which have been since the creation. Seldom were exhibited to the view of mankind, events more tremendous, awful, and calamitous, than those of the few last years. "It is with a mixture of horror and indignation, that we look back to the scenes which" have been exhibited; "it is with awe and trembling we look forward to what may, in the divine council, be the winding up of the eventful tragedy. It is some consolation, indeed, to those who are humbly waiting for their Lord's coming, to think that the gates of hell shall not finally prevail against his church. At the same time it should seem as if "woe had been pronounced against the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea; and that the devil was come down unto them, having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time." Surely the present is not a time to fold the arms in stupidity, nor close in darkness the eyes of the understanding.

Thirdly, the consideration of our situation as a nation, ought to have great weight in influencing us to obtain and disseminate knowledge. Our situation is as peculiarly interesting as that of any other people on the globe. History informs us what have been the conduct and fate of nations hitherto. Their declension has been almost as rapid and as certain as their rise. It remains to be seen whether the same destiny awaits this nation. Civil and religious Liberty can find no asylum in Europe or Asia, and shall her repose be disturbed in America? Are mankind here doomed to toil and butcher each other to gratify the ambition of kings and the corruption of courts? Let it be considered we have in our hands the destiny of five millions of people dispersed over a vast country, whose population will probably exceed an hundred millions before the close of the present century. The principles and customs now introduced, will extend their influence through many ages and over an immense extent of country. The world has been long enough a theatre of corruption, oppression and bloodshed. Asia and Europe, by reason of their atrocious vices, have disgraced the universe, and been visited again and again by the most signal calamities. A new order of things ought to be established and maintained on this side the Atlantic. Man ought here to assume a nobler character and a more dignified conduct. He ought not to amuse himself with the tinsel of luxury, or "the bubbles which smile in folly's cup." The wise, virtuous, and energetic conduct of the people of the United States, might prevent the whole continent from being despoiled by the vices of the eastern world. They ought to have the wisdom and firmness to say to the torrent of vice, luxury and corruption, which is pouring in upon us from that quarter, as the Almighty said to the ocean, "Thus far shalt thou approach, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." But unless the great body of the people can be persuaded to devote a sufficient portion of their time to obtain knowledge and make a judicious use of it, all will be lost; and while in the sight of God we shall seal our own infamy, we shall cause the misery of posterity.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

Extract of a Letter from a Student of Divinity, belonging to Boston, and now in London, to a Minister of the Gospel in Massachusetts, dated London, September 16, 1805.

"THERE is now in London, a converted Jew, by the name of Trey, of whom, doubtless, you have heard, who is preaching the Gospel to his deluded countrymen, *and with considerable success.* Many young Jews steal from their rigid parents, at the hazard of their lives, to hear him preach. It is

astonishing what persecution he and his followers meet with from their enraged countrymen. He is obliged to be attended to his meeting by a guard. The angry Jews appear to cry out, with the spirit of their fathers, "*Crucify him.*" The good people here expect much from his exertions: he is a man of great abilities, and the most fervent piety."

THE Baptist Missionary Society, in London, have done much to disseminate the knowledge of divine truth in the East-Indies. They design to procure the translation of the Bible into the language of that country, and to distribute copies of it amongst its numerous inhabitants. To promote this truly laudable purpose, donations are solicited in various parts of the Christian world, and the sum of one thousand guineas has recently been received in London. With a view to aid the design, a number of the Clergy in Philadelphia join with others, in an address to the well-disposed of this country, of which the following is an extract:

"Nothing, it appears to us, can be more deeply interesting to a truly benevolent mind. The design contemplated, is not to disseminate the favourite tenets of any particular sect of Christians. It is to print and propagate, among a race of heathen, who are sunk and degraded by the vilest and cruelest system of superstition and idolatry, *the pure word of eternal life, contained in the Holy Scriptures*, without any gloss or comment whatever. If this can be extensively effected, the happiest consequences may be expected to follow: since the natives of India, unlike most other Pagans, are many of them able to read, and still more of them are disposed earnestly to listen to what the Bible contains. Even the amelioration of their condition in this life, by a knowledge and belief of the Scriptures, would be an event calculated to produce a lively joy in every mind influenced by humanity: for their horrible superstition subjects them unceasingly to the most dreadful torments, and annually deprives a large number even of life itself. But in addition to this, how interesting must be the thought to every pious mind, that many of these miserable creatures, by having a Bible in their hands, may not only better their worldly condition, but become truly converted unto God, and, through the merits of the Saviour, be raised to eternal happiness and glory. Among the many objects which we know are now soliciting the patronage of the pious and the liberal, throughout our country, we cannot but think, that this deserves a marked attention. Nor can we forbear to add, that we have good reason to believe, that donations from the inhabitants of the United States, for the promotion of the design which has here been specified, would greatly animate and encourage the worthy men who are engaged in

the translation of the Scriptures, by giving them a striking proof that their arduous work interests the feelings, and is accompanied by the good wishes of Christians, in every region to which the knowledge of it has extended.

“Some other important considerations, which it is hoped will as much encourage the liberality of the public, as they animate the hopes and labours of the missionaries in India, ought to be briefly stated. At Serampore, the immediate seat of the mission, there are a type foundery and printing-presses, together with a valuable library, consisting chiefly of books containing the various copies and readings of the Scriptures, with whatever can materially facilitate the labours of a translator. Learned natives can be procured to assist in the work : and the local situation of the mission is such as will render its distribution throughout India easy and immediate. The missionaries themselves, (among whom is the laborious, learned, and pious Mr. CAREY, Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of Fort-William, at Calcutta,) have been so long engaged in studying language, and in translating, that the employment has become in a good degree habitual.”

FROM THE CHURCHMAN'S MAGAZINE.

THE GARDENER AND ROSE-TREE.

A FABLE.

Affectionately addressed to Mrs. J. H——, on the Death of her Child, by her truly sympathizing friend, S. P.

“IN a sweet spot, which Wisdom chose,
Grew an unique and lovely Rose,
A flow'r so fair was seldom borne—
A Rose almost without a thorn.
Each passing stranger stopp'd to view
A plant possessing charms so new :
'Sweet Flow'r !' each lip was heard to say—
Nor less the owner pleas'd than they :
Rear'd by his hand with constant care,
And planted in his choice parterre,
Of all his garden this the pride,
No flow'r so much admir'd beside.

Nor did the Rose unconscious bloom,
Nor feel ungrateful for the boon :
Oft, as her guardian came that way,
Whether at dawn, or eve of day,
Expanded wide—her form unveil'd,
She double fragrance then exhal'd.

As months roll'd on, the spring appear'd,
Its genial rays the Rose matur'd ;

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Oft, as her guardian came that way,
Whether at dawn, or eve of day,
Expanded wide—her form unveil'd,
She *double fragrance* then exhal'd.

As months roll'd on, the spring appear'd,
Its genial rays the Rose matur'd ;

Forth from its root a *shoot* extends—
 The parent Rose-Tree downward bends,
 And, with a joy unknown before,
 Contemplates the yet embryo flow'r.

' Offspring most dear ! (she fondly said,)
 ' Part of myself ! beneath my shade
 ' Safe shalt thou rise, whilst happy I,
 ' Transported with maternal joy,
 ' Shall see thy little buds appear,
 ' Unfold, and bloom in beauty here.
 ' What though the Lily, or Jonquil,
 ' Or Hyacinth, no longer fill
 ' The space around me—*All* shall be
 ' Abundantly made up in *thee*.

' What though my present charms decay,
 ' And passing strangers no more say
 ' Of *me*, ' Sweet flow'r !'—Yet *thou* shalt raise
 ' Thy blooming head, and gain the praise ;
 ' And this reverberated pleasure
 ' Shall be to me a world of treasure.
 ' Cheerful I part with former merit,
 ' That it my darling may inherit.
 ' Haste then the hours which bid thee bloom,
 ' And fill the zephyrs with perfume !'

Thus had the Rose-Tree scarcely spoken,
 Ere the sweet cup of bliss was broken :
 The Gard'ner came, and with one stroke
 He from the root the offspring took ;
 Took from the soil whereon it grew,
 And hid it from the parent's view.

Judge ye, who know a mother's cares
 For the dear tender babe she bears,
 The parent's anguish—ye alone
 Such sad vicissitudes have known.

Deep was the wound ; nor slight the pain
 Which made the Rose-Tree thus complain :

' Dear little darling ! art thou gone,
 ' Thy charms scarce to thy mother known,
 ' Remov'd so soon, so suddenly
 ' Snatch'd from my fond maternal eye ?
 ' What hadst thou done, dear offspring, say,
 ' So *early* to be snatch'd, away ?
 ' What ! gone for *ever* !—seen *no more* !
 ' For *ever* I thy loss deplore.
 ' Ye dews descend, with tears supply
 ' My now for ever tearful eye ;

‘ Or rather come some *northern blast*,
 ‘ Dislodge my yielding roots in haste !
 ‘ *Whirlwinds*, arise ! my branches tear,
 ‘ And to some distant region bear,
 ‘ Far from this spot, a wretched mother,
 ‘ Whose fruit and joys are gone together.’

As thus the anguish’d Rose-Tree cry’d,
 Her owner near her she espy’d ;
 Who in these gentle terms reprov’d
 A plant, though murmur’ing, still lov’d :

‘ Cease, beauteous flow’r, these useless cries,
 ‘ And let my lessons make thee wise.
 ‘ Art thou not mine ? Did not my hand
 ‘ Transplant thee from the barren sand,
 ‘ Where once, a mean, unsightly plant,
 ‘ Expos’d to injury and want,
 ‘ Unknown and unadmir’d, I found,
 ‘ And brought thee to this fertile ground ;
 ‘ With studious art improv’d thy form,
 ‘ Secur’d thee from th’ inclement storm,
 ‘ And, through the seasons of the year,
 ‘ Made thee my unabating care ?
 ‘ Hast thou not blest thy happy lot,
 ‘ In such an owner—such a spot ?
 ‘ But now, because thy shoot I’ve taken,
 ‘ Thy best of friends must be forsaken.
 ‘ Know, flow’r lov’d, e’en this affliction
 ‘ Shall prove to thee a benediction ;
 ‘ Had I not the young plant remov’d,
 ‘ (So fondly by thy heart lov’d,)
 ‘ Of me thy heart would scarce have thought,
 ‘ With gratitude no more be fraught :
 ‘ Yea—thy own beauty be at stake
 ‘ Surrender’d for thy offspring’s sake.
 ‘ Nor think, that hidden from thine eyes,
 ‘ The infant plant *neglected* lies ;
 ‘ No—I’ve *another garden*, where,
 ‘ In richer soil and purer air,
 ‘ It’s now transplanted, there to shine
 ‘ In beauties fairer far than thine.

‘ Nor shalt thou always be apart
 ‘ From the dear darling of thy heart ;
 ‘ For ’tis my purpose *thee* to bear
 ‘ In future time, and plant thee there,
 ‘ Where thy now absent off-set, grows,
 ‘ And blossoms a *CELESTIAL Rose*.
 ‘ Be patient, then, till that set hour shall come,
 ‘ When thou and thine shall in new beauties bloom :

' No more its absence shalt thou then deplore—
' Together grow, and ne'er be parted more.

These words to silence hush'd the plaintive Rose;
With deeper blushes reddening now she glows,
Submissive bow'd her unrepining head,
Again her wonted, grateful fragrance shed—
Cry'd, ' Thou hast taken only what's thine own,
' Therefore thy will, my Lord, not mine, be done.'

SPRING.

Translated from Virgil, by William Sotheby, F. R. S. and A. A. S.

SPRING comes, new bud, the field, the flow'r, the grove,
Earth swells, and claims the genial seeds of love:
Ether, great lord of life, his wings extends,
And on the bosom of his bride descends,
With show'rs prolific feeds the vast embrace
That fills all nature, and renews her race.
*Birds on their branches hymeneals sing,
The pastur'd meads with bridal echoes ring;
Bath'd in soft dew, and fann'd by western winds,
Each field its bosom to the gale unbinds:*
The blade dares boldly rise new suns beneath,
The tender vine puts forth her flexile wreath,
And, freed from southern blast and northern snow'r,
Spreads without fear, each blossom, leaf and flower.
Yes! lovely Spring! when rose the world to birth,
Thy genial radiance dawn'd upon the earth;
Beneath thy balmy air creation grew,
And no bleak gale on infant Nature blew.
When herds first drank the light, from earth's rude bed,
When first man's iron race uprear'd its head,
When first to beasts the wild and wood were given,
And stars unnumber'd pav'd th' expanse of heaven;
Then, as through all the vital spirit came,
And the globe teem'd throughout its mighty frame;
Each tender being, struggling into life,
Had droop'd beneath the elemental strife,
But thy mild season, each extreme between,
Soft nurse of nature, gave the golden mean.

ERRATA.—In No. 2, page 39, line 12 from the bottom, for "expressions" read expression.—Page 37, line 1, after the word pursuit, add of truth.—Page 59, line 26, for "corrupt" read pure—in the next line, for "pure" read impure—and in line 11 from the bottom, for "with danger" read without. In No. 3, p. 65, l. 30, for "arise" read arose—p. 66, l. 35, after "was" add not.

